

# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROUND TABLE

*A confidante of Cecil Rhodes, Alfred Milner was another supporter of imperial federation, which he saw as but a means to perpetuate British power in the guise of a supranational state encompassing the UK and all its Dominions.*

**Part 2 of 4**

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## ALFRED MILNER: SERVANT OF EMPIRE

**H**aving such considerable political and economic power at his disposal, Cecil Rhodes had the luxury of being able to delegate responsibility for realising his vision to other figures within the British Establishment; of these, Alfred Milner was to become his principal representative.

Of English and German parentage, Milner spent his early years in Germany before moving to England in 1869. He attended Oxford as an undergraduate from 1872 to 1876, becoming one of its more distinguished students. He was president of the Oxford Union in 1875 and later achieved first-class honours. Although at Oxford at the same time as Rhodes, and even in the same clubs, remarkably there is no evidence that they actually knew each other at that time.

His post-Oxford career also followed a somewhat different path to that of Rhodes. In 1881 Milner became a journalist for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, working with William Stead and eventually rising to the position of assistant editor. In the mid-1880s he dabbled in politics, making an unsuccessful run for Parliament in 1885. Milner then moved into the public service, attaining a number of senior positions befitting an Oxford-educated man, including: private secretary to George Goschen, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Undersecretary to the Egyptian Ministry of Finance from 1889 to 1892; and, on his return to England, Chairman of the Internal Revenue Board. In February 1897 he was appointed High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony, a dual appointment that was to prove to be one of the highlights of his Government career.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Rhodes's, Milner's exposure to the idea of imperial federation can be definitively traced to individuals he met while studying at Oxford. The primary source of this inspiration was prominent Canadian author George Parkin, who visited Oxford in 1873. Parkin had impressed and inspired Milner at an Oxford Union debate where he had argued for "a closer union between England and her colonies" in the form of an "Imperial Federation".<sup>42</sup> They subsequently became lifelong friends, and Parkin's vigorous advocacy of imperial federation had a strong influence on Milner. Just before taking up his post in South Africa in 1897, Milner wrote to Parkin telling him that he had been "greatly influenced" by his ideas and that in his new position he would feel "more than ever" a need for Parkin's "enthusiasm and broad hopeful view of the Imperial future".<sup>43</sup>

Milner also alluded to Parkin's influence in his book *The British Commonwealth* (1919), noting that it was at Oxford where he had been "first stirred by a new vision of the future of the British Empire". In his Parkin-inspired vision, the Empire became a "world-encircling group of related nations...united on a basis of equality and partnership, and...by moral and spiritual bonds".<sup>44</sup>

Post-Oxford, Milner's support for imperial federation received further reinforcement during his time as assistant editor at the *Pall Mall Gazette*. As we saw in part one, William Stead, the *Gazette's* editor and later friend of Rhodes, was an enthusiastic supporter of reforming the British Empire and of a much closer Anglo-American relationship. This was reflected in the *Gazette's* "Gospel", a lengthy document which endorsed the "political union" of all the "English-speaking states" on the pessimistic grounds that: "The Federation of the British Empire is the condition of its survival. As an Empire we must federate or perish." The "Gospel" also stated that "inevitable destiny" would compel Britain and the US to "coalesce". When he left the *Gazette*, Milner remained on good terms with Stead and in frequent contact, even while posted to Egypt, with imperial unity often the topic of their communications.<sup>45</sup>

Milner's definitive personal statement of his support for imperial federation is his so-called "Credo", a document written late in his life and not published until after his death in 1925 by the *Times*—then under the editorship of fellow Round Table member Geoffrey Dawson. The Credo expressed Milner's thoughts about the British Empire that he had held since Oxford. It was also an affirmation of Milner's belief in the inherent superiority of the British people as a race and culture. The Credo was also Milner's way of definitively identifying himself as British, effectively repudiating his German parentage. In the Credo, Milner declared himself a "British Race Patriot" and "a Nationalist and not a cosmopolitan". Milner, however, recognised that Britain was "no longer a power in the world which it once was" and he expressed the hope that the Dominions could be "kept as an entity". He redefined the British state from a purely geographical unit to one based on race: wherever British people were in appreciable numbers should be considered part of Britain.<sup>46</sup>

For Milner, imperial federation was but an end in itself—one that would preserve and perpetuate British power in the guise of a supranational state encompassing the United Kingdom and all its Dominions. He had made this sentiment quite clear as early as 1885 in a speech he delivered while campaigning for Parliament. Milner's speech not only expressed views that he would retain for the rest of his life—as revealed in his Credo—but also exposed his apparent conviction that imperial federation would hasten world peace.

*...I am no cosmopolitan... I think we can foresee a time when the great Anglo-Saxon Confederation throughout the world, with its members self-governing in their domestic concerns, but firmly united for the purposes of mutual protection, will not only be the most splendid political union that the world has ever known, but also the best security for universal peace.*<sup>47</sup>

However, unlike Rhodes and Stead, Milner was sceptical that an Anglo-American re-union was possible. In fact, he was wary of American intentions and did not believe the division caused by the American Revolution could be so easily reversed. "No doubt a great many Americans are thoroughly friendly to us," Milner was to write to a colleague in 1909, "but a great number are hostile. The best thing we can hope for is to keep on good terms with them. I neither anticipate nor desire anything more."<sup>48</sup> For Milner, preserving the British Empire in some new form was the highest priority; the goal of recovering the US he regarded as an unrealistic distraction.

More importantly, Milner did not share Rhodes's obvious enthusiasm for enlarging the British Empire. In 1884, for example, Milner explained to the Secretary of the Oxford Liberal Association his conviction:

*I am not anxious to extend the bounds of an Empire already vast or to increase responsibilities already onerous. But if I desire to limit the sphere of our actions abroad, it is in order that within this limited sphere we may be more and not less vigorous, resolute & courageous.*<sup>49</sup>

**Milner's enthusiasm for this state-socialist model stemmed from his "early faith in a planned society conceived and ordered by the scientific intelligence".**

Serving the British Empire in Cairo, Milner maintained this view in 1890, telling colleagues that he had always been "for strong unwavering masterful assertion of our power within reasonable limits" and had "no sympathy with the lust for unlimited Empire".<sup>50</sup> Noting the erosion of Britain's imperial footprint in China, for instance, Milner recommended against attempts to limit the expansionist aims of other imperial powers. "The true answer to them," Milner wrote to his former employer Goschen in 1898, "is to strengthen our own position in quarters, where we on our side, can be masters if we choose..."<sup>51</sup> In a 1906 speech, he was more explicit:

*Our object is not domination or aggrandisement. It is consolidation and security... [W]e wish the kindred peoples under the British family to remain one united family forever.*<sup>52</sup>

Consolidation was Milner's aim, and imperial federation was a means to that end.

In a piece praising Milner, written by one of the Round Table's few American members in 1915, it was claimed that he favoured "a genuinely democratic conception of government".<sup>53</sup> But, in reality, Milner was contemptuous of democracy. Despite his earlier service to parliamentarians, his own political aspirations and his later service in Lloyd George's War Cabinet, he was scornful of that "mob at Westminster". "I regard it as a necessary evil," Milner wrote of democracy in a letter to fellow Round Table member Lionel Curtis on 27 November 1915; "I accept it without enthusiasm, but with absolute loyalty, to make the best of it."<sup>54</sup>

Milner was also a socialist, though some observers suggest he adopted more of a Germanic or "Bismarckian state socialism" that favoured the application of political will or state planning rather than natural forces to achieve desired outcomes. According to Stokes, Milner sought to fit people into a "pre-arranged scheme of society"; the people were not to be involved in its creation. Milner's enthusiasm for this

state-socialist model stemmed from his "early faith in a planned society conceived and ordered by the scientific intelligence". Influenced by Otto von Bismarck's methods of uniting the Germanic people under one state, Milner had as his goal the consolidation of all the British people through an act of political will rather than through popular consent.<sup>55</sup>

Rhodes was no longer Prime Minister of the Cape Colony when Milner arrived to take up his new posting, but he remained a powerful and influential figure. That the two men dealt with each other regularly is confirmed by most accounts, but they do not seem to have been too close. Milner claimed that he got on "capitally" with Rhodes and professed to admire his abilities as "a great developer", although he found the Colossus of Africa "too self-willed, too violent, too sanguine, and always in too much of a hurry".<sup>56</sup>

There was also suspicion: despite his admiration for Rhodes, Milner privately admitted to finding him "enormously untrustworthy", and believed Rhodes would "give away" Milner or anybody else "to gain the least of [his] private ends".<sup>57</sup>

Rhodes, in contrast, seemed to have few such qualms about the wily Milner. According to Rhodes's private secretary, Philip Jourdan, the Colossus "had the highest opinion of the abilities of Lord Milner as an administrator" and the two "frequently met in South Africa and discussed political matters".<sup>58</sup> Such was Rhodes's regard for the bureaucrat that in July 1901 he asked Milner—who was already privy to Rhodes's secret society scheme—to become one of his trustees. Milner was suitably obliging, accepting with a letter expressing his "complete sympathy" for Rhodes's "broad ambitions for the [British] race".<sup>59</sup> It was perhaps inevitable that the more reliable Milner, steeped in the ways of the British Establishment and possessing a more level-headed personality and unstinting devotion to the cause of imperial unity, became Rhodes's preferred heir to realise his dream of imperial federation.

As for the easily overawed and socially crusading Stead, Rhodes removed his name from his final will, citing Stead's "extraordinary eccentricity"—a reference to both his support for the Boers and what Whyte describes as Stead's newfound "obsession with spooks".<sup>60</sup> During the 1890s, Stead had developed a growing fascination with the paranormal, including clairvoyance, ghosts and communicating with spirits.

He was a Theosophist and had met the founder of Theosophy, Madame Blavatsky, in 1888 when she came to London. Stead admitted to being both "delighted with" and "repelled by" Blavatsky, but the relationship was such that she later sent the Theosophist *Secret Doctrine* to his offices for review.<sup>61</sup> These interests had diminished his public standing and had obviously raised doubts in Rhodes's mind as to his overall reliability. Milner, in contrast, had no such stains on his public reputation or eccentricities.

## VISIONS OF IMPERIAL UNITY

The identification of Milner and Rhodes with the cause of imperial federation is not because their vision was unique, but because of the means by which they sought to achieve it. Indeed, the idea of imperial federation was not the property of Milner, Rhodes, Ruskin, Parkin or Stead, but had a history stretching back to the time of the American War of Independence. Adam Smith, for example, raised the idea in his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Recognising that the dispute stemmed from the American colonists' refusal to be "taxed by a parliament in which they are not represented", Smith advocated that representation be ensured through "the union of Great Britain with her colonies".

To this end, he envisaged an "assembly which deliberates and decides concerning the affairs of every part of the empire" and

which would "have representatives from every part of [the empire]".<sup>62</sup>

Smith's vision was, however, very much ahead of its time, and the idea of imperial union or federation did not re-emerge in Britain until the 1820s when an increasing number of colonies appeared to be agitating for self-government. Fearing that the Empire might break up, a growing number of British parliamentarians, journalists, businessmen and other influential figures endorsed the idea of the colonies having some form of direct or indirect representation in Westminster.

The debates over this issue canvassed three options for "Empire federalism": parliamentary—the colonies having sitting members in Westminster, while retaining their own legislature; extra-parliamentary—the colonies being represented in Westminster by agents acting alone or together as a Colonial Board; and super-parliamentary—the imperial federation model of a central parliament. These debates were short-lived, though, once it became apparent that relatively few colonies were sufficiently well established or at odds with London to want to break away from Britain's orbit.

The idea surfaced again in the 1870s and 1880s, then in reaction to the threat posed to Britain's great power status by Russia, the United States and Germany. During this new round of political debates over imperial federation, the concept of an imperial council emerged as the most popular option.

In a speech in 1872, for example, Benjamin Disraeli, then Leader of the Opposition, endorsed the idea of a "representative council" in Westminster "which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuing relations with the Home Government".

Other advocates suggested the creation of a special Colonial Council or a Colonial Committee in the Privy Council.<sup>64</sup>

At the forefront of these late 19th century efforts to promote imperial federation was one of the Round Table's predecessors—the Imperial Federation League (IFL).

Founded in 1884 by Francis de Labilliere, an Australian lawyer, and Sir John Colomb, formerly of the British Royal Navy, the League aimed to "secure by Federation the unity of the Empire" by uniting Britain with its colonies in "perfect equality".<sup>65</sup>

Parkin and Milner were both involved in the IFL; Milner's role was indirect, while Parkin's was as a full-time agent of the group, conducting tours of Australia and New Zealand on the IFL's behalf and later becoming its chief speaker and propagandist. Following the IFL's demise in 1893, Milner was instrumental in raising funds so Parkin could continue to promote the cause of imperial federation, although the funding was insufficient to sustain this effort for long.<sup>66</sup>



Alfred Milner (1854–1925) (Photo by Elliott & Fry, from H. W. Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, 1902)

## THE "SOCIETY OF THE ELECT"

Rhodes took his own first steps towards imperial federation on 5 February 1891 when he and Stead agreed on the structure of the secret society, or "Society of the Elect", that he had sought since 1877. Like Weishaupt's Illuminati, this proposed secret society had an elaborate hierarchical structure, based on that of the Jesuits, which comprised: at the top, the position of "General of the Society"—a position modelled on the General of the Jesuits—to be occupied by Rhodes, with Stead and Lord Rothschild as his designated successors; an executive committee called the "Junta of Three", comprising Stead, Milner and Reginald Baliol Brett (Lord Esher); then a "Circle of Initiates", consisting of a number of notables including Cardinal Manning, Lord Arthur Balfour, Lord Albert Grey and Sir Harry Johnston; and outside of this was the "Association of Helpers", the broad mass of the Society.<sup>67</sup>

One of the puzzles surrounding this meeting is whether the "Society of the Elect" actually came into being. Quigley claims in *Tragedy and Hope* (1966) that Rhodes's "Society of the Elect" was not only "formally established" in 1891, but also that its "outer circle known as the 'Association of Helpers'" was "later organised by Milner as the Round Table".<sup>68</sup>

In his posthumous book, *The Anglo-American Establishment* (1981), Quigley insists that the Society had been formed and that the disappearance of the secret society idea from Rhodes's sixth and seventh wills in favour of the scholarships was only a calculated ruse. The scholarships were "merely a façade to conceal the secret society", which had remained Rhodes's objective right through to his death.<sup>69</sup> Other researchers, though, have been less certain.

Billington, for example, challenges Whyte's contention that the organisation was "stillborn", acknowledging the Society "did organise in a provisional sense" between 1889 and 1891, yet he argues that Quigley ignored its ineffectiveness and eventual collapse.<sup>70</sup>

Evidence that for a time the Society did exist in some form can be found scattered in various places. For instance, Stead had already formed the "Association of Helpers" by 1890, when he founded *Review of Reviews* as a means of making Rhodes's secret society idea—in another Illuminati-like touch—"presentable to the public without in any way revealing the esoteric truth behind it" (Stead). Recognising his contribution with the *Review* and the Helpers, Rhodes enthusiastically told Stead: "You have begun to realise my idea..." Further progress appeared to have been made in 1891 when Lord Esher and Milner, according to Stead's account, both agreed to participate in the Society.<sup>71</sup>

There are other tantalising fragments of evidence, though they are incomplete. According to Marlowe, for instance, it was while visiting England in April 1891 that Milner saw Stead, who "talked to him about Cecil Rhodes and his scheme for an imperial secret society". Yet Marlowe cannot tell us if Milner decided to join.

He also notes that Milner met with George Parkin, Lord Roseberry and Lord Esher, all named by Quigley as known or suspected "initiates".<sup>72</sup> In addition, Rotberg



Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902)

records that Rhodes met with Esher during his 1891 visit to Britain and later corresponded with him about forming a secret league of "the English race", in which each member would be required to find two more supporters. "It could begin with you," Esher wrote to Rhodes, "and might well roll up indefinitely!"<sup>73</sup>

We also find, in an exchange with Stead in April 1900, in which he explained that Stead would no longer be a trustee (because of Stead's opposition to the Anglo-Boer War), that Rhodes acknowledged the existence of their "Society":

*How can our Society be worked if each one sets himself up as the sole judge of what ought to be done? Just look at the position here. We three are South Africa, all of us your boys. I myself, Milner and [F. Edmund] Garrett, all of whom learned politics from you—and yet instead of deferring to the judgment of your own boys you fling yourself into violent opposition to the war.*<sup>74</sup>

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### Endnotes

41. Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: the "Kindergarten" in Edwardian Imperial Affairs*, Duke University Press, 1968, pp. 8-10; John E. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union*, University of Toronto Press, 1975, pp. 6-7; and Robert I. Rotberg with Miles F. Shore, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 106.
42. Quoted in John Evelyn Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner: The Man of No Illusions, 1854–1925*, Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd, 1958, pp. 44-45.
43. Quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, p. 6.
44. Quoted in Nimocks, *Milner's Young*

*Men*, p. 13.

45. Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, Jonathan Cape, 1925, vol. II, pp. 12-13, 322-323 (including quotes); Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, p. 14.
46. Quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 7-8.
47. Quoted in A. M. Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics: A Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power*, Anthony Blond, 1964, p. 130 (emphasis added).
48. Quoted in Wm Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill*, W.W. Norton & Co, 1992, p. 76.
49. Quoted in Eric Stokes, "Milnerism", *The Historical Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1962), p. 49.

Yet in this very exchange, which Quigley cites as evidence of the enduring nature of the Society, we can also see the signs that the Society was not functioning as effectively or as smoothly as Rhodes had envisaged. Milner, Esher, Stead, Rothschild and Garrett besides, there is a dearth of evidence that any of the others named in Rhodes's wish list was approached or agreed to participate in his secret society.

More importantly, it would appear that events in southern Africa, coupled with Rhodes's growing health problems, were of greater concern to his thinking than his broader imperial schemes. Thus in 1894, citing his increasingly onerous financial commitments in southern Africa, Rhodes refused a request from Stead to provide a promised income of £5,000 a year to the Association of Helpers, by then in rapid decline, effectively killing that part of his scheme.<sup>75</sup>

Judging this apparent fiasco, we can best surmise that Rhodes's infectious enthusiasm in this case clearly exceeded the practicality of his idea. But it would be a mistake to conclude that he abandoned it.

#### THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS

Rhodes did not lose his enthusiasm for Anglo-American leadership of an imperial federation, but, as his health deteriorated and events in southern Africa continued to dominate his time and thinking, he turned to other means of achieving his goal posthumously. By the late 1890s, instead of a secret society Rhodes embraced the idea of a scholarship for white men drawn from the British Empire and the United States. In choosing this course, Rhodes appears to have been influenced by the arguments of Astley Cooper, editor of the periodical *Greater Britain* and an ally of Stead, and Thomas Beare, from the University of Edinburgh.

During the 1890s, Cooper and Beare had advocated the concept of "Empire scholarships", with the aim of strengthening "those invisible ties...which will keep together...the Anglo-Saxon race". Rhodes ruminated on the scholarship idea throughout the last decade of his life, eventually incorporating it into his sixth and seventh wills. However, it was in his final will of 1 July 1899 that the idea took its penultimate form as the "Rhodes Scholarships".<sup>76</sup>

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Rhodes's detailed instructions for the scholarship scheme provided for 60 students from the Empire, 32 from the United States and a smaller number from Germany to be taught and accommodated at Oxford for one year. The primary objective of the scholarships, according to Rhodes's will, was to instil in the minds of the students "the advantages to the Colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention of the unity of the Empire".<sup>77</sup>

While his vision of imperial unity has not been achieved, Rhodes's scholarship scheme has become one of his more enduring and successful legacies. A disproportionate number of its candidates have achieved high office. For example, prominent Rhodes Scholarship alumni include the former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke and US President Bill Clinton, as well as at least nine senior officials in the Clinton Administration and 11 in the Kennedy Administration. This has prompted some observers to claim that the Rhodes Scholarships have produced a "permanent party of government as it exists in law, business, intelligence, diplomacy and the military" (Hitchens).<sup>78</sup>

While such claims are debatable—there appear to be few Rhodes Scholars in the current Bush Administration—there can be little doubt that the Rhodes Scholarships have advanced the careers of many aspiring politicians and bureaucrats to a remarkable degree.

#### MILNER'S "KINDERGARTEN"

Although the "Society of the Elect" failed to eventuate in Rhodes's lifetime—itself cut short by heart failure in March 1902—Milner, with his so-called "Kindergarten", had inadvertently planted the seeds of its realisation in southern Africa.

The Kindergarten was a group of young Oxford graduates, mostly from New College, who had been drawn to southern Africa to serve in the British colonial administration during and after the Boer War (1899–1902). They included J. F. (Peter) Perry, Lionel Curtis, Hugh Wyndham, Patrick Duncan, Geoffrey Robinson (who took up the surname Dawson in 1917), Philip Kerr, Lionel Hitchens, Richard Feetham and Robert H. Brand. This group of recruits, almost all in their twenties and unmarried, came with a belief in the superiority of English civilisation and a

50. *ibid.*, p. 50.

51. *ibid.*, p. 51.

52. Quoted in George Louis Beer, "Lord Milner and British Imperialism", *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1915, p. 304 (emphasis added).

53. *ibid.*, p. 301.

54. Quotes in Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity*, Pimlico, 2000, p. 48; and Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics*, p. 314.

55. Stokes, "Milnerism", pp. 51-52 (including Milner quotes).

56. Quoted in Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner*, pp. 186-187; and John Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, Hamish Hamilton, 1976, pp. 114-115.

57. Quoted in Rotberg, *The Founder*,

p. 690.

58. Philip Jourdan, *Cecil Rhodes: His Private Life By His Private Secretary*, John Lane, 1911, p. 234.

59. Quoted in Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, p. 115.

60. Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. II, p. 210 (including Rhodes quote).

61. See W. T. Stead, *The M. P. for Russia: Reminiscences & Correspondence of Madame Olga Novikoff*, A. Melrose, 1909, vol. I, pp. 130-133.

62. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*, University Paperbacks, 1961, vol. II, pp. 137, 139 (first pub. 1776). See also David Stevens, "Adam Smith and the

Colonial Disturbances", in Andrew

Skinner and Thomas Wilson (eds), *Essays on Adam Smith*, Clarendon Press, 1975, pp. 202-217.

63. Ged Martin, "Empire Federalism and Imperial Parliamentary Union, 1820-1870", *The Historical Journal* XVI(I) (1973), pp. 65-68.

64. *ibid.*, pp. 88-89; Disraeli quoted in W. D. McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, Blandford Press, 1968, 2nd edition, pp. 121-122.

65. Seymour Ching-Yuan Cheng, *Schemes for the Federation of the British Empire*, Columbia University Press, 1931, pp. 37-39.

66. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, p. 14.

67. Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*, p. 131;

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strong commitment to imperialism, fulfilling Milner's criteria of having "brains and character". They served under Milner to reconstruct the devastated Boer republics and were all inspired by his visions of a united South Africa and an imperial federation. For the members of the Kindergarten, Milner was "the centre of their world" (Kendle); he was their "father-figure and Socrates", whom they considered "the fountainhead of political wisdom and the greatest statesman of the Empire" (Nimocks).<sup>79</sup>

Milner had first ventured to southern Africa convinced that it was the "weakest link" in the British Empire; to "prevent it snapping" and to maintain British supremacy in Africa, he believed that waging war on the Boers would be necessary.<sup>80</sup> When Milner retired in April 1905 in the wake of bitter controversy over his plan to import indentured Chinese labour, he returned to Britain deeply pessimistic about South Africa's future in the British Empire. This view was not shared by the Kindergarten, whose members remained convinced they could finish the work that Milner and Rhodes had started (it was their machinations that had contributed to the outbreak of the Boer War) and integrate the now devastated and defeated Boer states into the Empire.

To push the cause for closer unity in South Africa, the Kindergarten employed a number of measures aimed at shaping popular and elite opinion. Drawing on a range of funds, including The Rhodes Trust,<sup>81</sup> the Kindergarten kept out of public view as much as possible while carefully managing their propaganda organs, seeking to create support for union. These methods of organised propaganda included their periodical *The State*, which Kindergarten members edited from 1907 to 1909, and the formation of Closer Union Societies, which further propagated unification propaganda but under the guise of bipartisan political leadership. Finally, a united South Africa was popularised in the lengthy propaganda pieces *The Selborne Memorandum* and *The Government of South Africa*, both written by Kindergarten member Lionel Curtis (1872–1955).<sup>82</sup>

**The "Kindergarten" was a group of young Oxford graduates...with a belief in the superiority of English civilisation and a strong commitment to imperialism...**

*It is obvious...that Milner's young men did not unite South Africa. Their efforts were important in bringing closer union to the attention of the general population and keeping it there. And members of the group did exert some influence upon those, both British and Boer, who determined the final form of the constitution. But forces far more powerful than anything the kindergarten could muster were responsible for South African unification.*<sup>84</sup>

It is questionable, though, that the Kindergarten's role was as pivotal as its members chose to believe. Well before the Kindergarten had launched its campaign, Britain was already receptive to the idea of a united South Africa. Moreover, key Boer leaders Jan Smuts and Louis Botha, confident that they would in time dominate the proposed union, had also embraced the concept. According to historian Norman Rose, for example, despite their "at times, hysterical lobbying", which often did no more than soften the opinion of British settlers, the Kindergarten in fact played "a marginal role".<sup>83</sup>

Nimocks, in his detailed history of the Kindergarten, is more dismissive of the movement's impact on South African unification:

But in the overall scheme of things, such observations are perhaps redundant, for, as Kendle notes, the Kindergarten "left South Africa convinced of the merits of organized propaganda and behind-the-scenes discussion", which they now hoped to apply to the unification of the British Empire as a whole.<sup>85</sup> Having consolidated the colonies of southern Africa, they now set their sights on the world.

*Part Three examines the founding of the Round Table and its efforts to secure the support of the Dominion governments for imperial federation.*

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and Whyte, *Stead*, vol. II, pp. 209-210.

**68.** Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*, p. 131.

**69.** Carroll Quigley, *The Anglo-American Establishment: From Rhodes to Cliveden*, Books in Focus, 1981, pp. 33, 34, 38; excerpts at <http://userscyberone.com.au/myers/quigley.html>.

**70.** David P. Billington Jr, "The Tragedy and Hope of Carroll Quigley", *The American Oxonian*, Fall 1994 (found through the Wayback Machine Internet archive at <http://www.leonardo.net/davidpb/quigley.html>);

Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. II, p. 210.

**71.** Stead and Rhodes quoted in Estelle W. Stead, *My Father: Personal & Spiritual Reminiscences*, William Heinemann, 1913, p. 240.

**72.** Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, p. 21.

**73.** Quoted in Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 416.

**74.** Quoted in Miles F. Shore, "Cecil Rhodes and the Ego Ideal", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Autumn 1979, p. 256. Garrett, the *Pall Mall Gazette's* correspondent in southern Africa and later Editor of the *Cape Times*, is described by Quigley as an "intimate friend" of Stead, Milner and Rhodes (*The Anglo-American Establishment*, pp. 43-44).

**75.** Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 416; and Billington, "The Tragedy and Hope of Carroll Quigley", *ibid.*

**76.** Rotberg, *The Founder*, pp. 664-668.

**77.** Quoted in Rotberg, *ibid.*, p. 667

**78.** See Christopher Hitchens, "Minority Report", *The Nation*, 14 December 1992, pp. 726, 743. See also William F. Jasper,

"Reviewing the Rhodes Legacy", *The New American*, 20 February 1995.

**79.** Milner quoted in Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 2; Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, p. 21; Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, p. 132.

**80.** Quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, p. 8.

**81.** Through Milner, £1,000 was secured from the Rhodes Trust in 1906, but on the condition the funding source be kept secret; see Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, p. 206.

**82.** Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 22-45; Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, pp. 54-108.

**83.** Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, p. 65.

**84.** Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, pp. 121-122.

**85.** See also Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 22-45.

